

A THIRD *IF*?

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I argue that English has a third type of *if*, that is, a declarative subordinator that introduces irrealis content clauses. I present evidence that strongly suggests that irrealis *if*-clauses function like VP-internal complements or subjects, and not like adjuncts. In syntactic tests like extraction, preposing, clefting, and constituent order, irrealis clauses behave predominantly like complements. Moreover, no other preposition with conditional or concessive meaning can be used to replace irrealis *if*, which strongly suggest that irrealis clauses should not be considered conditional protases. A close analysis of the semantics of irrealis clauses also points towards a non-conditional analysis. Irrealis clauses refer to hypothetical states of affairs, but no idea of condition is implied in their meaning. Irrealis clauses usually have to be extraposed, but some predicates like *prefer*, *imagine* and *hate* allow irrealis clauses without extraposition. This further supports my proposal that irrealis *if* should be considered a subordinator. Finally, I conclude by suggesting that *when* and *how* are also strong candidates for the subordinator label, and I put forward ideas for future research.

Declaration

I have read and understood The University of Edinburgh guidelines on plagiarism and I declare that this written dissertation is all my own work except where I indicate otherwise by proper use of quotes and references.

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Introduction

This dissertation proposes that the class of declarative subordinators in English should be extended to include a new item that, following Pullum (1987), I will call irrealis *if*. Examples of irrealis *if* can be seen in (1), where, if present, the proform *it* should not be interpreted as referentially linked to an external antecedent, whether in the wider discourse or pragmatically retrievable (exophoric reading):

- (1)
- a. It would be wonderful if degrees didn't cost the earth.
 - c. I would be glad if you could enlighten me with some advice.
 - d. I would prefer if the DSB had its own library.
 - e. Pibe hates it if people say that servi vicarii were replacement slaves.
 - e. Can you imagine if people really believed that?

At first sight, the *if*-clauses in (1) seem to be ordinary adjuncts, but I will show that, semantically and especially syntactically, conditional adjuncts and clauses introduced by irrealis *if* are substantially different. Semantically, irrealis *if*-clause are related to conditional adjuncts in that they both denote hypothetical states of affairs, but irrealis clauses do not have a condition as part of their meaning, as we can see if we replace the *if*'s above with other conditional prepositions or expressions such as *provided that* or *as long as* (again, exophoric readings should be excluded):

- (2)
- a. *It would be wonderful provided that degrees didn't cost the earth.
 - c. ?I would be glad as long as you could enlighten me with some advice.
 - d. *I would prefer provided that the DSB had its own library.
 - e. *Pibe hates it as long as people say that servi vicarii were replacement slaves.
 - e. *Can you imagine provided that people really believed that?

The main differences between conditional *if* and irrealis *if* are, however, syntactic. Conditional *if* is a preposition that heads prepositional phrases functioning as adjuncts. Conversely, irrealis *if* is a subordinator that introduces declarative content clauses that function as complements inside the VP, as we can see if we apply some of the tests for complementhood. (3) shows that irrealis clauses allow extraction (a), can be foregrounded in pseudo-clefts (b), and cannot be preposed and followed by an intonational break (c):

(3)

- a. This book, which would be wonderful if many people read.
- b. What I would hate is if I had to go to the hospital for this.
- c. *If nobody believed in God, I would prefer.

This dissertation is structured as follows: in Chapter 1, I review the literature on irrealis *if*. Few authors have studied the phenomena I deal with in this dissertation. Of these, only Pullum (1987) considers irrealis *if* as a subordinator. Williams (1974), Steriade (1981) and Pesetsky (1991) do not analyse irrealis *if* as different from conditional *if*, but suggest instead that interpretative rules allow for irrealis clauses to be interpreted as the logical argument of the matrix predicate. I will show that their accounts introduce rules and assumptions that are not warranted in other parts of the grammar, and that more parsimonious accounts should be preferred. In Chapter 2, I will discuss the reasons for positing a third *if*. In section 2.1 I will argue that irrealis clauses are semantically different from conditional adjuncts. In section 2.2.1, I will present a series of syntactic arguments for considering irrealis clauses as internal complements and therefore irrealis *if* as a subordinator. In section 2.2.2, I will deal with the question of the status of the proform *it* that often co-occurs with irrealis clauses. I will argue, based on Postal and Pullum's (1988) description of expletives, that this *it* is a non-referential, semantically empty dummy that optionally takes the place of irrealis clauses when they are extraposed. In section 2.2.3, I will briefly suggest that *when* and *how* should also be considered members of the class of subordinators. Finally, in chapter 3 I will discuss a possible candidate for the label of irrealis *if*, that is, the *if* that follows predicates like *doubt*. I will argue that this *if* should *not* be considered an irrealis *if*, but simply one of the interrogative subordinators. I will conclude by highlighting the wider implications of irrealis *if*, and by presenting future research questions raised by the enlargement of the subordinator class.

Before I proceed with the rest of the dissertation, however, I should clarify the terminology I will use throughout, and why I assume that English already has two *if*'s.

How many if's? Prepositions and subordinators in The Cambridge Grammar.

As the title of this thesis suggests, my analysis rests on the assumption that there exist two types of *if*'s. Traditional grammars treat *if* as a subordinating conjunction, regardless of whether it introduces a conditional or an interrogative clause. My analysis is based instead on Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) (*The Cambridge Grammar* from now on) revised

categorisation of prepositions and subordinators, which recognises two *if*'s: a preposition and an interrogative subordinator. This distinction is fundamental for the account of irrealis *if* presented here, and I will therefore dedicate this section to outlying the arguments in favour of it.

I will start by presenting the traditional account of *if*, as presented by Quirk et al. (1985) and I will then compare it with that of *The Cambridge Grammar*. The two grammars are by no means original or alone in their respective analyses. *The Cambridge Grammar*'s revision of the preposition class was first argued by Jespersen (1924: 89) and is also found in Emonds (1985: Ch. 6 albeit with some differences) and McCawley (1998: 195-6) among others. As the two major reference grammars for English, however, they will be my main sources for the discussion in this section.

Quirk et al. (1985: 997-8, 1008, 1054) do not distinguish between two classes of *if*. Their analysis recognises only one type of *if*, that is, a subordinating conjunction that introduces subordinate clauses. Thus, the distinction between 'conditional' and 'interrogative' resides not in the introducing item, but on the type and function of the clause that it precedes. Conditional *if* introduces adverbial clauses functioning as adjuncts, whereas interrogative *if* governs nominal clauses that can function as subject, direct object or complement of a noun or an adjective. Labels like 'nominal' and 'adverbial', however, are misleading. The analogy with the behaviour of nouns and adverbs does not maintain (pace Leech 2004: 132), as not all nominal clauses can be replaced by a noun (or NP) (4a-b), or vice versa (4c-d):

- (4)
- a. the question whether they are guilty or not.
 - b. the question *guilt/their guilt.
 - c. We left before the storm.
 - d. *We left before that the storm had ended.¹

Moreover, the labels are superfluous, as they are not assigned based on the *form* of the clauses, but on their function within larger units (e.g. subject, complement). However, Quirk et al have to spell out these functions separately, as they are not predictable from the label itself. As no relationship between the form of a clause and its function is ever given, equally no explanation is given for the different distribution of conditional and interrogative clauses. This is unsatisfactory given the fact that, in their analysis, the two *ifs* belong to the same class.

¹ For Quirk et al. (1985) the whole item '*that the storm had ended*' is a nominal clause.

Quirk et al. also fail to explain that conditional and interrogative clauses can differ in form as well as distribution. The examples in (5) are all from their grammar, and are described as “abbreviated clauses” (1985: 1086) that is, clauses with an ellipsis of the subject and the finite form of *be*. The fact that interrogative *if* cannot be followed by abbreviated clauses (6) is, however, not addressed:

(5)

- a. If in doubt, see me.
- b. If known, such facts have been reported.
- c. If possible, you should test all moving parts.
- d. If coming by car, take the A10 and turn off at the A414.

(6)

- a. *I wonder if in a hurry.
- b. *They asked if known.
- c. *I wonder if possible.
- d. *I don't know if coming by car.

The differences in function, distribution, and form between clauses introduced by conditional and interrogative *if* are accounted for if the two *if*'s are treated as belonging to two different classes.

The Cambridge Grammar (598-600, 1011-1014) revises the traditional categories of preposition, conjunction and adverb entirely. Whilst traditional grammars distinguish between the three classes depending on the type of dependents that they can take, *The Cambridge Grammar* takes the view that a distinction on this basis is untenable. Just like nouns and verbs can take a range of different complements (NP, content clause, etc. or no complement at all) without this warranting a change of category, prepositions should remain prepositions regardless of the type of complement that they take. Items are instead categorised on the basis of their distribution and syntactic function. Thus, in (7) the items in italics are all considered prepositions by *The Cambridge Grammar* irrespective of the fact that they each take a different kind of dependent (underlined and labelled in brackets):

(7)

- a. They are both very keen [*on golf*]. (NP)
- b. The magician emerged [*from behind the curtain*]. (PP)

- c. I didn't know about it [*until recently*]. (AdvP)
- d. They took me [*for dead*]. (AdjP)
- e. We can't agree [*on whether we should call in the police*]. (Int. clause)

(*The Cambridge Grammar*, 599, adapted from ex. 3)

This new classification would seem to leave no residual need for a category of subordinators. But the crucial difference between prepositions and subordinators is that the former are heads of phrases functioning (predominantly) as adjuncts, whereas the latter are meaningless, non-head markers of subordination that introduce clauses functioning (predominantly) as complements. Thus, *The Cambridge Grammar* departs from Quirk et al. not only in the labelling of items, but also in the syntactic and structural analysis of the items introduced by prepositions and subordinators. Consider the underlined items in (8):

- (8)
- a. We only started crying [after the end of the film.]
 - b. We only started crying [after the film ended.]
 - c. We thought {that [the film was emotionally manipulative]}

Quirk et al. (1985: Ch. 15) refer to items in square brackets in (8b) and (8c) as subordinate clauses. The only difference they recognise is in their function (adjunct and direct object respectively). The bracketed content in (8a) is described as a PP functioning as adverbial adjunct. *The Cambridge Grammar*, on the contrary, treats the bracketed items in (8a) and (8b) as prepositional phrases, functioning both as adjuncts, and differing only in that the dependents inside them are an NP and a content clause respectively. The item in curly brackets in (8c) is analysed as a subordinate clause with a clause as head (in square brackets) and subordinator *that* as a dependent marking the subordinate nature of the clause that follows it. Whilst in (8b-c) the preposition *after* has lexical content and describes the (temporal) relationship between *we started crying* and *after the film ended*, marker *that* does not establish a relationship between the subordinate and the main clause. In (8c) the relationship is between the main verb (*thought*) and the content clause: *that* merely functions as a marker that the clause that follows it is not an independent clause (and this is why *that* can often be omitted).

It should be clear now why *The Cambridge Grammar* recognises two types of *if*. Conditional *if* is a preposition with lexical content heading phrases that function as adjuncts. Interrogative *if* is a subordinator that introduces subordinate interrogative content clauses functioning as

complements. This dual classification allows one to account for all the differences in form, function and distribution that the traditional analysis either failed to explain or simply ignored. Below, I will list all these differences in detail.

a) Interrogative *if* only introduces finite clauses. Conditional *if* can take a range of dependents (see (5) and (6) above).

b) As adjuncts, items headed by conditional *if* can be preposed. Internal complements cannot (Emonds 1985: 249; Chomsky 1965: 101):

(9)

- a. We will go to the park if it's sunny.
- b. If it's sunny, we will go to the park.

(10)

- a. We were wondering if we should stay a bit longer.
- b. *If we should stay a bit longer we wondered.

c) In relation to *wh*-extraction, conditional *if* phrases are strong islands, interrogative *if*-clauses are not (cf. Chomsky 1986, Cinque 1990, Huang 1982).

(11)

- a. We would have called you if we had known about your illness.
- b. *What would we have called you if we had known about *t*?

(12)

- a. They asked us if we knew about her illness.
- b. What did they ask us if we knew about *t*?

d) As adjuncts, conditional *if* phrases cannot function as predicative complements of specifying *be*. Interrogative *if*-clauses can².

² *The Cambridge Grammar* (p. 974) states that interrogative clauses introduced by *if* (as opposed to *whether*) are not allowed in this function. My informants, however, find examples like (14b) acceptable, if stylistically marked. Various similar examples can also be found in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

(13)

- a. We will only go if it's sunny.
- b. *The only condition is if it's sunny.

(14)

- a. They asked us if the manuscript was real.
- b. The real question is if the manuscript is real.

e) Conditional *if* cannot be replaced by *whether*. Interrogative *if* can be replaced not only by *whether*, but also, occasionally, by *that*:

(15)

- a. We will go to the party if they invite us.
- b. *We will go to the party whether they invite us.

(16)

- a. I was wondering if/whether we should go to the party.
- b. I doubt if/that they're coming.

Chapter 1

Literature review

Introduction.

Irrealis *if* has attracted little in depth attention in the literature. Lakoff (1968: 69f) Noonan (1985: 104-5) and MacCawley (1988:149) all briefly mention that *if* can be found in the role of declarative subordinator, but do not devote much attention to the issue, nor its wider implications for the grammar. Only four authors, Williams (1974), Steriade (1981), Pullum (1987) and Pesetsky (1991), have studied irrealis *if* in detail, reaching rather different conclusions. In this section, I will review their contributions. At this stage, I will point out the problems with previous accounts, but I will refrain from offering my alternative analysis, which I will develop instead in the following chapter. Since many of my arguments are based on and expand Pullum's account, I will not discuss his work at this stage, but I will refer to it in Ch. 2 when I will present my full-fledged proposal.

Before I procede, I should establish the terminology that I will be using throughout this section. The authors that I will review approach the subject from different theoretical frameworks and using different labels for the same phenomena. For example, none of the authors use the term *subordinator*, preferring *complementizer* instead. Similarly, adjuncts are often referred to as adverbial clauses and internal complements as objects of the VP. For the sake of clarity and consistence I will use my own terminology throughout, based on *The Cambridge Grammar*, and as discussed in the introduction above.³ Most importantly, the authors discussed here reject the notion of the existence of *irrealis if* and of *irrealis clauses*, and do not use these labels, referring to them only as conditional adjuncts. The issue of the exact status of these clauses is the question that this thesis attempts to answer, and so its full discussion is left to the next chapter. Suffice to say at this stage that I use the label *irrealis clause* to refer to clauses that appear to be conditional adjuncts but that are semantically an argument of the predicate in the matrix clause.

³ For a discussion of the difference between NP objects and content clause complements see *The Cambridge Grammar* pp. 1017-22.

1.1. Williams (1974).

The first author to notice irrealis clauses and to suggest that they be treated as something other than ordinary conditional adjuncts is Williams (1974). He notes that in cases like (1a), the *if*-clause cannot be considered as an ordinary conditional clause because *glad* cannot occur without a complement (1b):

- (1)
- a. I would be glad if Bill were here.
 - b. *I would be glad.

(Williams 1974: 157, ex 105)

Of course, *glad* is one of many predicates, like *know* and *agree*, that can appear without an overt complement. In these cases, however, the complement has to be anaphorically linked to an item that has to be retrieved either pragmatically or from discourse (Null Complement Anaphora, cf. Hankamer and Sag 1976 and Grimshaw 1979). Thus, it is no more possible to initiate a conversation with '*I'm glad*' than it is to initiate it with '*I know*' (Williams 1974: 158). Moreover, irrealis *if*-clauses are subject to licensing restrictions that cannot be applied to ordinary conditional adjuncts. We can see these restrictions in (2), where irrealis *if*-clauses are only allowed with predicates that license *that*-clauses (2a-d) and that are factive (2e-f):

- (2)
- a. *I would be dead that Bill were here.
 - b. *I would be dead if Bill were here. (no irrealis reading)
 - c. It is shameful that John left
 - d. It would shameful if John left.
 - e. It is unlikely that Bob left. (non-factive)
 - f. *It would be unlikely if Bob left.

(Williams 1974:158-9, adapted from ex.107)

This leads Williams to conclude that the *if*-clauses in (1) and (2) cannot be analyzed as ordinary adjuncts. Williams' suggestion is not, however, that irrealis clauses be considered internal complements, as in some aspects –such as their failure to function as subjects (3a-b) and in their inability to allow *will* to occur in them (3c-d)– they do not seem to behave like internal complements at all:

- (3)
- a. *If John left would be a shame.
 - b. That John left would be a shame.
 - c. *I will be glad if there will be no more fighting.
 - d. I will be glad that there will be no more fighting.

(Williams 1974: 160, ex. 111-5)

Williams proposes instead that irrealis *if*-clauses be considered as one of a series of adjuncts that behave as if they were closer to the VP than other adjuncts. Other members of this category are certain *because*-clauses that also appear to be somewhat complement fulfilling (4a). These clauses behave differently from other adjuncts in that they cannot follow an intonation break (4b) and allow reflexivization (4c-d):

- (4)
- a. John is concerned because the mail is late.
 - b. *John is concerned, because the mail is late.⁴
 - c. John is angry because there are pictures of himself in the post office.
 - d. *John isn't angry, because there are pictures of himself in the office.

(Williams 1973: 161, ex. 119-20)

Williams ascribes the differences between irrealis *if*-clauses and complement fulfilling *because* clauses on one side and other adjuncts on the other to a difference in the position in which they are generated. The former are generated as daughters of S, whereas the latter are daughters of S' (1973: 163). Thus, no special status or category shift is posited for irrealis *if*.

As I will argue in Ch. 2, my analysis is not compromised by the at times deviant behaviour noticed by Williams, as I allow for irrealis *if* to have a certain degree of idiosyncrasies and to retain some of the features of conditional *if* (the inability to allow *will* being one of them).⁵ I will not deal with the status of adjuncts like the *because*-clauses discussed by Williams, as they are far beyond the reach of this dissertation. Suffice to say at this point that most of

⁴ His judgment of (4b) is surprising to say the least: the native speakers I consulted did not find this ungrammatical in the least, and many examples of similar sentences can be found in the COCA or on the internet.

⁵ This constraint on conditionals does not necessarily apply to all conditionals, though. Haegemann and Wekker (1984: 48) note that peripheral conditionals do allow *will*: *If it will rain tomorrow we might as well cancel the match now*.

Williams' observations concern irrealis clauses which function as complements of adjectives rather than as extraposed subject clauses or as complements of verbs. As Peseteský (1991: 77-8) has noted, and for reasons that I shall explain in Ch. 2, the irrealis clauses found in these functions seem to defy categorization even more openly than other irrealis clauses.

1.2. Steriade (1981)

Another author who considers and then rejects an internal complement analysis is Steriade (1981). She entertains two possible analysis for irrealis clauses. In the first one, the syntactic and the semantic structure of irrealis clauses match perfectly, with irrealis *if* functioning as a subordinator like *that* or *whether* and the *if*-clause functioning as internal complement to the VP. In the second analysis, the one which she supports, the irrealis clause is an ordinary conditional adjunct⁶ that, under certain constraints, is subject to an interpretive rule that links it to the logical argument of the matrix predicate. She opts for the second analysis for two main reasons: on the one hand, she claims that irrealis *if*-clauses (like all conditional clauses) behave like adverbial and not content clauses. On the other, irrealis *if*-clauses are “indistinguishable from conditional *if*-clauses” (1981: 3). I will start by looking at her first claim.

Steriade argues that the view that irrealis *if* replaces *that* and *whether* in certain contexts is ill-conceived because *if*-clauses are never content clauses (1981:4). This is already problematic, because this statement appears to deny the existence of interrogative *if*-clauses (that is, clauses where *if* is replacing *whether*), which are a subtype of content clauses. Thus, even though she never explicitly says as much, her argument implies not only that irrealis *if*-clauses are not complements, but also that neither are interrogative *if*-clauses. This seems a rather outlandish claim, and one that is not found elsewhere in the literature as far as I am aware. In (5) we can see the examples that she uses to show that *if*-clauses are not content clauses, as they cannot occur in preverbal position whereas *that*-clauses and *whether*-clauses can:

- (5)
- a. That he left is tragic.

⁶ Steriade uses the traditional terminology of ‘adverbial clause’ for ‘conditional adjunct’ and ‘noun-clause’ for ‘content clauses’. She does indeed acknowledge the analysis of conditional adjuncts as PPs (she attributes this to Jackendoff 1977). As she recognises, the PP analysis of conditional clauses does not have a great bearing on her argument.

- b. Whether he left is still an open question.

(6)

- a. *If he left would be tragic.
- b. *If he left is still an open question.

(Steriade 1981: 4, ex 8 and 10)

I do not contest the ungrammaticality of (6), nor that irrealis *if*-clauses have slightly different distribution from *that*-clauses. But Steriade fails to acknowledge that (6a) and (6b) differ in a crucial way. (6a) is declarative, whereas (6b) is interrogative. If she is using the examples in (6) to show that *if*-clauses are not content clauses like *whether*-clauses, she should also explain why *if* and *whether* are often interchangeable, and why there is hardly any conditional meaning in interrogative *if*-clauses.

Steriade also points out that that irrealis *if*-clauses cannot be the focus of pseudo clefts, whereas content clauses (interrogative or otherwise) can. Setting aside the confusion with interrogative clauses, her grammaticality judgment is questionable:

(7)

- a. What I regret is that he left.
- b. What I wonder about is whether he left.

(8)

- a. *What I would regret is if he left.
- b. *What I wonder about is if he left.

(Steriade 1981: 4, ex. 11-12)

My informants do not find (8) ungrammatical, and numerous examples can be attested on the internet from reputable sources (e.g. *what I would hate is if they keep income tax and add VAT on top*).⁷ In fact, Pullum uses pseudo clefts with an irrealis *if*-clause in focus position as one of his examples (*What I would really hate would be would be if I had to fill out a form*, Pullum 1987: 266).

⁷ <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/64515> [Accessed 30th July 2010].

The confusion between irrealis and interrogative carries over to Steriade's last examples in favour of her claim:

(9)

- a. The dispute whether John was guilty went on for weeks.
- b. * The dispute if John was guilty went on for weeks.⁸

(Steriade 1981: 5, ex. 13)

Once again, Steriade seems to be arguing against considering *if* as an interrogative subordinator rather than as a declarative, irrealis one. The examples in (9) say nothing about irrealis *if*. Instead, they show that interrogative subordinators *if* and *whether* have different distributional patterns, something which most grammars agree on without neither questioning the status of *if* nor even contemplating the existence of irrealis *if* (cf. *The Cambridge Grammar*: 973-4, Quirk et al. 1985: 1054). As we shall see in Ch. 2, these examples show in fact that some distributional differences between *that* and irrealis *if* are not a sufficient reason (other things being equal) for excluding the existence of a declarative *if* subordinator, just like distributional differences between *whether* and *if* are not enough to exclude the existence of an interrogative *if*.

The second reason why Steriade rejects the internal complement analysis is that irrealis *if*-clauses occur in positions where content clauses are not allowed, for example in sentence-initial position:

(10)

- a. If he left it would be tragic.⁹
- b. *That he left it would be tragic.
- c. * Whether he left it is an open question.

(11)

- a. If he leaves you will regret it.
- b. *That he left you will regret it.

(Steriade 1981: 5, ex. 14-15)

⁸ My correspondents find interrogative *if*-clauses functioning as predicative complements acceptable, if stylistically marked. Furthermore, examples can be found of this function in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), in the written as well as the spoken sections.

⁹ Interestingly, McCawley (1988:149) marks sentences like (10a) with a question mark, and notes that they do not prepose as easily as adjuncts.

The examples that Steriade uses are all irrealis *if*-clauses, and her grammaticality judgment are indisputable. Nevertheless, what seems to trigger the ungrammaticality is not so much the sentence initial position, but the fact that *if*-clauses seem to be able to co-occur with the pronoun *it* whilst other content clauses cannot. Steriade seems to hint at this when she notes that “*if*-complements appear in structures that superficially resemble Vacuous Extraposition, regardless of whether a *that*-clause may be well formed in the same environment” (1981: 5). She presents the following examples:

(12)

- a. I would reveal/disclose it if he left.
- b. *I will reveal/disclose it that he left.

(13)

- a. Would you understand it if I stopped doing the dishes?
- b. *Have you understood it that I stopped doing the dishes?¹⁰

(Steriade 1981: 5, ex. 16-17)

One of the main characteristics of irrealis clauses, and indeed one if not the main reasons for positing the existence of irrealis *if*, is that the *if*-clause is said to constitute, at least semantically, the argument of the predicate in the matrix clause. Steriade describes this as “internal reading”, that is, a reading “under which the object of [the predicate in the matrix clause] is the state of affairs referred to in the *if*-clause” (1981: 1). She rightly notes, however, that an external reading, that is, a reading in which the logical argument of the matrix predicate is a state of affairs previously mentioned or retrievable from context, is also always available. Teasing the two readings apart (internal and external, or, in my terminology, irrealis and conditional) is indeed often difficult, and the difference between the two often slim. Nonetheless, the two readings should be kept in mind at all times, as the question risks becoming muddled otherwise. This leads me to my problem with Steriade’s use of examples (12-13) above. The *if*-clauses in (12a) and (13a) seem indeed to have rather different syntactic behaviour from the *that*-clause in their *b* counterparts. These *if*-clauses, however, are probably not irrealis clauses at all, but ordinary conditional adjuncts. We can see this more clearly if we compare one of them with a similar sentence presented by Pullum, and if we turn it into a pseudo-cleft:

¹⁰ This is *understand* with the meaning ‘sympathise’.

(14)

- a. We made a record of it_i [if the animal did anything unusual._i]
- b. *What we made a record of is if the animal did anything unusual.
- c. *What we would reveal/disclose is if he left.

(Pullum 1987: 266, ex. 29)

Pullum notes that the pseudo cleft does not work because it does not make sense, semantically, to reveal or make a note of a hypothetical fact. In (14) the *it* refers to the result of the state of affairs of the animal doing something unusual or him leaving.¹¹ Moreover, this means that the acts of revealing and making a record are posterior to the acts referred to in the *if*-clauses. As we shall see in Ch. 2 §1, this time lapse is allowed in conditional interpretations but excluded by irrealis clauses.

Having argued against an internal complement analysis, Steriade suggests instead that irrealis *if*-clauses be considered as a subset of conditional clauses which are subject to “an interpretative rule that links the adverbial clause to a propositional argument position of the main verb” (1981: 7). This subset is allowed only when an anaphoric element (*it* or *so*) is present, or with Null Complement Anaphora predicates (NCA) such as *mind*, *care*, etc. In other words, irrealis clauses are “only available if the sentence is, without them, complete: in particular, if all subcategorised positions are independently filled” (1981: 7).

There are three main problems with the interpretative rule that Steriade suggests. The first is that she simply assumes, without much discussion, that the proform *it* that is often found with irrealis *if*-clauses is cataphoric. As Pullum (1987) argues and I will show in Ch. 2, this is at best uncertain.

Secondly, as I will show in more detail in Ch.2, irrealis clauses may occur even without any (alleged) anaphoric element, as in the examples below (the asterisk before the brackets shows that the clause is not complete if they are removed):

(15)

¹¹ The difference is explicit in Italian, where the irrealis clause cannot co-occur with the proform *lo*:

- i) **Lo_i preferiamo [se non vengono.]_i*
 it prefer.1PL if not come.3PL
 ‘We prefer if they don’t come’
- ii) *Lo_i riveleremo [se fugge]._i*
 it reveal.1PL if flee.3SG

- a. Imagine *(if you were a big Hollywood star).
- b. I prefer *(if people are nice to me).
- c. I hate *(when people eat in the library).

Examples like the ones in (15) are dismissed by Steriade as the ungrammatical predictions of an internal complement analysis, but their grammaticality is unquestionable. In Steriade's defence, it should be said that these examples may have been of dubious grammaticality at the time of her writing. In fact, ten years later Pesetsky refers to similar examples as marginally acceptable, and as stylistically marked. This gradual change points towards a hypothesis that, diachronically, irrealis *if*-clauses are moving from conditional adjunct to extraposed internal complement to non-extraposed internal complement, a type of change that is attested in English and other languages (cf. Lehmann 1988, Hopper and Traugott 1993: Ch. 7, Givón 2001: Ch. 12), and which is consistent with my account¹². I will not attempt to discuss this hypothesis here, but it is a fascinating question worth pursuing in future research.

Finally, I should note that Steriade's discussion of NCA predicates is also based on false premises. Some of the NCAs that she uses as examples license interrogative complements, as we can see if we replace *if* with *whether* or another *wh*-word in her examples:

(16)

I wouldn't mind/don't care/wonder/can't remember/haven't found out if he came.

(Steriade 1981: 8, ex. 21a)

(17)

- a. I wonder whether he came/what dress she wore.
- b. I can't remember whether he came/where he went to school.
- c. I haven't found out whether he came/how much money I owe him.

It is not clear why Steriade chooses to ignore an interpretation of the predicates in (16) in which the *if*-clause is neither a conditional adjunct nor an irrealis clause, but simply an interrogative one. Once again, if one followed her analysis through, one would have to exclude that interrogative *if* exists at all. If we did this, the grammaticality of interrogative *if*-clauses licensed by predicates that do not allow NCA would become inexplicable:

¹² López-Couso and Méndez-Naya (2001) have attempted to answer this question already, but their judgements of whether *if*-clauses are complements or adjuncts are not always consistent, and what seem to be interrogative rather than irrealis *if*-clauses are sometimes included in their analysis.

(18)

- a. We tried to determine whether/if bilingual children are more intelligent.
- b. *We tried to determine.

(18a) should be ungrammatical according to Steriade's account, as there is no null anaphoric element filling the predicate's argument position.

The question becomes more complicated with predicates like *mind* and *care*. The problem with these predicates is that they can license both declarative and interrogative finite clauses, and even non-finite ones, as shown in (19):

(19)

- a. I don't mind/don't care if/whether you are late tonight.
- b. Jane didn't seem to care/mind whether her children would destroy her house or not.
- c. Jane didn't seem to care/mind that her children were destroying the house.
- d. Jane didn't seem to care/mind people making a mess of her house
- e. Do you mind doing the dishes?

Since when *if* is used with these predicates it can always be replaced by *whether*, it is tempting to analyse the irrealis clauses in (19) as interrogative rather than irrealis. Replacement of *if* with *whether*, however, does not leave the meaning unchanged. When *whether* is used in (19a), it means that I am indifferent to the answer to the question "will you be late tonight?", and so it will hold true whether you are late or not. When *if* is used, (19a) means that I am indifferent to the possibility of you being late, and it does not necessarily hold true that I will be equally indifferent to you arriving on time. The *if* version is thus declarative, not interrogative. Either way, there is no reason for positing a null complement and an interpretative rule with *if*, but no null complement with other subordinators or complement types. In fact, this account would not be able to distinguish (19) from examples where the *if*-clauses is a conditional adjunct and the predicate really has a null complement as in (20) (the antecedent is provided by the previous sentence). Notice that in these cases *whether* is not allowed, as the complement position is full:

(20)

Usually I don't like waiting_i, but I won't mind___i if/*whether you promise you'll never be late again.

Steriade also claims that her analysis explains why *that*-clauses and *if*-clauses behave differently with regards to *wh*-movement: as adjuncts, *if*-clauses do not form a constituent with their main predicate, as her bracketing shows (22):

(21)

- a. Just how sorry that he left do you think you are?
- b. *Just how sorry if he left do you think you are?

(22)

- a. You think you are [just how sorry [that he left.]]
- b. You think you would [be [just how sorry]] [if he left.]

Steriade (1981: 9, ex. 23-4)

Steriade's judgment and explanation of the difference between (22a) and (22b) is faultless, and her observation seems to challenge my hypothesis. I will return to this in Ch. 2, so suffice to say here that, as I mentioned in reference to Williams's comments above, the behaviour of irrealis *if*-clauses functioning as complements of adjectives is highly irregular, but that this does not necessarily undermine the existence of irrealis *if*.

Finally, Steriade notices that irrealis *if*-clauses appear to be restricted to factive predicates. This is taken as a confirmation of her hypothesis, as she considers it as a predictable consequence of the fact that in conditional constructions the antecedent has to be presupposed to interpret the consequent. Thus, examples when the interpretative rule is expected to apply but that are unacceptable nonetheless can be predicted on the basis that they are semantically or pragmatically odd, as "it is not conducive to progress to first presuppose P and then to comment on the truth, likelihood, possibility of P" (1981: 10):

(23)

- a. # It would seem so if he left.
- b. # It would be true if he left.
- c. # It would be likely if he left.
- d. # It would be possible if he left.

(Steriade 1981: 10, ex. 25)

The effect in (23) is only explainable, in her view, if one considers irrealis *if*-clauses, and the sentences they are embedded in, as “semantic conditional sentences” (1981:10). This is not necessarily the case, however. In my analysis, irrealis clauses do maintain some of the semantic features of conditionals, particularly their hypothetical nature. The examples in (23) are semantically odd precisely because they attempt to comment on the truth or likelihood of something that is inherently hypothetical¹³. Moreover, as I shall reveal in the next chapter, the semantic oddness of (23b) is the best reason why a strictly conditional analysis of irrealis clauses should be avoided.

1.3. Pesetsky (1991)

An interpretative rule is also invoked in Pesetsky (1991). His If-Copying (IC) rule is almost identical to Steriade’s, as it “supplies a factive complement not explicitly present at other levels of representation” and it associates the interpretation in (24b) to sentences like (24a)¹⁴:

(24)

- a. John would like it if Mary knew French
- b. John would like it that Mary knows French if Mary knew French.

(Pesetsky 1991: 62, ex. 247)

The fact that the IC rule replaces an NPI licenser –conditional *if*– with a non-licenser (*that*) is used to explain why, as noted by Pullum (1987), irrealis *if*-clauses do not license NPIs (Pesetsky 1991:63). As with Steriade’s rule, an important restriction on the IC is that it is only applied when the direct object of the matrix predicate is occupied by a proform that is compatible with clauses. Thus, the IC rule fails to apply in cases like (25a) for which (25b) is not a possible representation:

¹³ It might be argued that (23b) and (23d) should not be semantically odd, as they simply state that something that is hypothetical is, indeed, possible or likely. In fact, the tautology might be part of the reason why they seem odd. It should also be noted that they are equally odd with a *that*-clause:

- i) # It would be likely that they came.
- ii) # It would be possible that they came.

¹⁴ This is how Pesetsky (1991: 62) phrases the IC rule:

1. Take a clause *k* of the form [*if* IP] or [*when* IP] where *k* modifies a sentence Σ .
2. Copy *k* as *k'* substituting *that* for *if*, making appropriate changes in mood so as to replace irrealis with realis mood marking.
3. Place *k'* in an argument position of Σ . Leave *k* as an adjunct modifier. (It gets interpreted as a restricting term, with Σ the nuclear scope)

(25)

- a. I would like her if Bill were to ask me about the painting.
- b. *I would like (it) that Bill asked me about the painting, if anyone were to ask me about the painting.

(Pesetsky 1991: 64, ex. 250)

As stated, however, the IC would also have to apply when the irrealis *if*-clause is postverbal. But in this position, NPIs are allowed, which should not be the case if the IC rule were being applied and were substituting *if* for *that*. Notice the contrast between (26a) and (26b)

(26)

- a. *I would like it if anyone could help me.
- b. If anyone could help, I would like it.

The only way the IC can be prevented from applying to contexts like (26b) is by admitting a difference in the nature of the proform *it* in the two examples. Thus, Pesetsky suggests that the *it* in (26a) is not referentially linked to the *if* clause, whereas the one in (26b) is. As we shall see in the next chapter, in (26a) the proform *it* cannot be anaphorically linked to the *if*-clause due to Backwards Anaphora Constraints (BAC, Bresnan 1971, Postal 1972), and so, Pesetsky argues, the IC rule has to intervene to link the irrealis clause to the logical argument of the matrix predicate (1991: 73).¹⁵ Conversely, in (26b) the IC rule need not apply because the *if*-clause is already referentially linked to the proform *it* and its argument position.

Pesetsky also uses the IC rule to explain why other proforms are not allowed in place of non-referential *it*:

(27)

- a. *I would love that_i [if unicorns existed]_i.
- b. *We can enjoy this_i without shame [if unicorns exist]_i.
- c. *I would prefer this_i if Kim [were not informed]_i.

(Pesetsky 1991: 74, ex. 300)

¹⁵ As we shall see, the BAC are not quite as clear and as uncontroversial as Pesetsky seems to assume.

He claims that these examples are not acceptable because the IC can only apply where the proform is compatible with a clause, and demonstratives are not (1991: 74). This is a rather puzzling statement, as Pesetsky himself notices that demonstratives are permitted when the *if*-clause is sentence initial, which should not be grammatical if demonstratives were not allowed to co-refer with clauses.¹⁶

The IC rule also encounters problems with irrealis clauses functioning as complements of adjectives. Pesetsky notices as much when he finds himself having to explain away examples where non-referential *it* is absent:

(28)

- a. I would be happy if Bill were here
- b. I'd prefer if you turned the lights off.¹⁷
- c. I'd be glad if you could be quiet for once.

(Pesetsky 1991: 78-9, ex. 312 and 323)

In these cases the IC rule seems to apply even though there is no *it* to be replaced by a *that*-clause. Pesetsky considers two possible explanations for this, both of which he finds unsatisfactory:

Here, however, the object position into which [the *that*-clause] is inserted is not occupied by *it*. It is either null and present, or structurally absent. If it is null and present, we will need to worry about an otherwise unprecedented occurrence of object *pro* in English. [...] On the other hand, if I was correct in surmising that [examples like (28)] contain no null version of object *it*, then there is no reason why IC should have to apply.

(Pesetsky 1981: 77-78)

¹⁶ Inexplicably, a few pages earlier (1991: 65), Pesetsky says himself that *it* is not the only anaphoric expression that can be linked to clauses (or the state of affairs associated with a clause), e.g. in his example (ex. 257): *If unicorns existed, that would be wonderful*.

¹⁷ This is one of a series of examples suggested to him by Irene Heim (p.c.) which he finds of dubious grammaticality:

- i) ??I'd hate if Bill didn't show up.
- ii) ??I'd love if someone discovered the answer.
- iii) ??I'd appreciate if you called me tomorrow.

I agree with his judgement on these examples, but, as it should be clear, I find examples like (28b) above perfectly grammatical. As I will argue below, these examples, possibly more acceptable in AmE, are not a problem for my analysis. In fact, they reinforce it.

Pesetsky admits that with adjectives such as those in (28a) it is possible to obviate the problem by assuming that the adjective is occurring intransitively and considering the *if*-clause as an ordinary conditional adjunct (1991: 79). But the same cannot be done for (28b), as *prefer* cannot be used intransitively (**I'd prefer*, **I'd be glad*, cf the discussion of Williams (1974) above).

In sum, the problem with Pesetsky's analysis, as with Steriade's, is that they both posit ad hoc interpretative rules that are not warranted in any other parts of the grammar. On the contrary, an irrealis *if* account uses categories, principles and constraints that can be seen in other constructions, and it does not require new assumptions or ad hoc mechanisms.

1.4. *Quer (2002) on Spanish.*

Finally, I will conclude my review by discussing Quer (2002), who brings together some of the analyses and observations summarized so far for Spanish. Spanish has complement clauses that are almost word for word translations of the English irrealis clauses:

(29)

- a. *Les molesta si te miro.*
 them annoy.3SG if you look-at.1SG
 'It annoys them if I look at you.'

(Quer 2002: 242, ex 1)

Quer's analysis of irrealis clauses, however, goes in the opposite direction to what I attempt to do here. Whereas my aim is to reclassify *if*-clauses as irrealis versions of *that*-clauses, Quer attempts to do the opposite, that is, treat *that*-clauses with irrealis mood as forms of conditional clauses. Even though his analysis goes against mine, his study shows the similar semantic interpretation between irrealis clauses and the subjunctive mood in languages like Spanish. I will use aspects of Quer's analysis below, but I will refrain from explicitly challenging his proposal, as including Spanish in my analysis would be far beyond the reach of this dissertation.

Conclusion

To sum up, in this section I have reviewed the analyses of irrealis *if* that have been presented in the literature. I have shown that the reluctance to consider irrealis clauses as complements rather than adjuncts leads authors to posit interpretative rules that are much bigger additions to the grammar than an irrealis *if* would be. Moreover, these rules do not satisfactorily account for all the data, and require that more rules be posited for relatively uncontroversial phenomena like interrogative or that-clauses. In the next chapter I will show why my account, modelled on Pullum's (1987) is a more parsimonious and consistent analysis.

Chapter 2

Irrealis if

Introduction.

In this chapter I will argue that the italicised items in (1) should be considered internal complements introduced by a declarative irrealis subordinator *if* or *when*:

(1)

- a. It would be wonderful *if they banned mobile phones from the library*.
- b. I prefer *if people don't talk in the library*.
- c. I would like it *if John stopped smoking*.
- d. I hate *when people don't keep their dogs on a leash*.
- e. Imagine *if you could just get a plane to the moon!*

I will show that, semantically, irrealis clauses share with conditionals the fact that they express a hypothetical state of affairs, but that, contrary to what other accounts claim, they do not convey a notion of precondition or causality (Comrie 1986). Syntactically, irrealis clauses behave largely like complement clauses and not conditional adjuncts, but they also present a series of idiosyncrasies that make it difficult at times to assign them an unequivocal label.

This chapter is organised as follows. In §2.1, I will illustrate the semantic interpretation of irrealis clauses. In §2.2.1, I will discuss the syntactic status of irrealis clauses. In §2.2.2, I will deal with the status of irrealis *it*, that is, the proform that is often found with irrealis clauses. Finally, in §2.3, I will briefly discuss *when* and *how* as other possible candidates for subordinator status.

2.1. The semantics of irrealis clauses.

The semantic interpretation of sentences in which irrealis clauses are embedded is difficult to pin down, and, *prima facie*, it appears to be identical to conditional constructions. This has led both Williams (1974) and Pesetsky (1991) to opt for an interpretation that combines the complement fulfilling properties of irrealis clauses with the conditional interpretation of

conditional adjuncts. Their interpretation is expressed in the paraphrase of the irrealis clauses in (2) with the sentences in (3) (my examples):

(2)

- a. Frank would be grateful if you left.
- b. Paul would prefer it if you came.

(3)

- a. Frank would be grateful that you came if you came.
- b. Paul would prefer it that you came if you came.

The paraphrases seem to be intuitively correct. If one posits that the irrealis clauses in (2) express the state of affairs that Frank and Paul would be grateful for or prefer, and one assumes that the conditional reading is always present, the paraphrases seem faultless. At a closer look, however, the interpretation in (3) is not satisfactory. As Pullum (1987: 261-2) has pointed out, irrealis clauses have an undoubtedly hypothetical character, but they do not express a condition. Consider the difference between (4a) and (4b). (4a) is an irrealis clause, whereas (4b) is an ordinary conditional.

(4)

- a. Maria would prefer it if John didn't tell people.
- b. If John didn't tell people, then Maria would prefer it.

(4a) means that *right now*, Maria would prefer John's (hypothetical) silence. (4b), on the contrary, means that, given the precondition that John complies to Maria's wish, then the consequence will be that Maria will prefer his silence, or the state of affairs resulting from his silence. In the conditional interpretation the state of affairs in the protasis has to (hypothetically) occur for the consequence in the apodosis to be true. In the irrealis sentence, Maria's preference does not depend on John's complying, and there is no implied evaluation of any state of affairs resulting from John's silence.

In his typology of conditional constructions, Comrie (1986) notes that there is usually a causal relationship between the protasis and the apodosis of a conditional construction, as it can be seen in the oddness of (5):

(5)

- # If Paris is the capital of France, then two is an even number.

(Comrie 1986: 80, ex. 9)

It is almost impossible to conceive of a causal relationship between irrealis clauses and their matrix clauses, as it does not make sense to posit that a preference for a given certain state of affairs is the cause of such preference. The absence of conditionality and causality can be seen more clearly if one makes time references explicit:

(6)

- a. Maria would prefer it if John didn't come tomorrow.
- b. If John didn't come tomorrow, then Maria would prefer it.

Again, the difference is very subtle, but it seems to me that in (6a) the act of preferring is set firmly in the present, whereas in (6b) Maria's preferring is construed as occurring tomorrow, as a reaction to John's failure to show up. The different time frames can be seen if we change tenses. The irrealis clause is of dubious grammaticality with futurate *will* in the main clause (7a), whilst the ordinary conditional is fine (7b) (the tense in the *if*-clauses has to change in both). Notice that when the expletive *it* is omitted in (7c), that is, when a conditional interpretation is inadmissible from a syntactic point of view, the ungrammaticality of the futurate version becomes unquestionable. Moreover, if we make both tenses in the present, the opposite effect obtains: the conditional becomes ungrammatical (7d) and the irrealis becomes acceptable (7e)

(7)

- a. ??Maria will prefer it if John doesn't come tomorrow.
- b. *Maria will prefer if John doesn't come tomorrow.
- c. If John doesn't come tomorrow, then Maria will prefer it
- d. *If John doesn't come tomorrow, then Maria prefers it.
- e. Maria prefers it if John doesn't come tomorrow.

The different behaviour of conditional and irrealis clauses with regards to tense has been noticed by Williams (1974) and then Pullum (1987). Pullum points out that (8a) below is only acceptable if the *it* is interpreted exophorically, and that (8b) is ungrammatical because both the external and irrealis reading are blocked:

(8)

- a. It will be great if Tracy was there. (*e.g. If Tracy was there to cook it, then the meal will be great uttered while at the table*)
- b. *It will be great if Tracy were there.

(Pullum 1987: 261, ex. 4-5)

As Pullum notes, (8b) can only be made grammatical by either changing *were* into an indicative form (e.g. *was* as in (8a)) or by making it into an irrealis by changing *will* into *would* in the matrix clause (1987:261).

Pullum also explicitly rejects Williams' (1974) paraphrases by arguing that the irrealis clause in (9a) is synonymous with (9b) but not (9c):

(9)

- a. It would be wonderful if unicorns existed.
- b. For unicorns to exist would be wonderful.
- c. If unicorns existed, for unicorns to exist would be wonderful.

(1987: 262, ex. 7)

As Pullum notes, (9a-b) state that there are no unicorns, but that their hypothetical existence is wonderful. In contrast, (9c) states that, in a hypothetical world *w* where unicorns exist, their hypothetical existence is wonderful. As it is clear now, the paraphrase in (9c) is incoherent because it refers to a non-hypothetical situation (in an alternate world *w* unicorns *do* exist) as if it were hypothetical.¹⁸ This may sound rather convoluted, but it becomes clear if we consider one of Steriade's examples reported in Ch. 1 (ex. 23 in that chapter):

(10)

- # It would be true if he left.

Now consider a paraphrase of (10) along Williams (1974) and Pesetsky's (1991) lines:

¹⁸ Pullum uses Stalnaker's (1968) notion of possible worlds to express these sentences. Thus, (8a) means that "there are no unicorns in the actual world w_o (I will call this the irrealis presupposition) but in that unicorn-containing world w_u the existence of unicorns is wonderful." (1987: 262).

(11)

If he left, that he left would be true.

There is nothing semantically odd about (11), and yet it is meant to be the logical interpretation of a semantically odd sentence. If, instead, we paraphrase (10) following Pullum (1987) the result is just as odd as the original sentence:

(12)

That he left is not true, but for it to be true it would be true.

Interestingly, the paraphrases that Pullum uses show a striking similarity between irrealis clauses and *for-to*-clauses. In fact, various authors have pointed out the hypothetical nature of *for-to*-clauses and even linked *if*-clauses to them. Jespersen, notices that “the combination of *for* and an infinitive denotes some vague possibility or something imagined” (1914: 304), and Bresnan also convenes that *for-to* complements describe unrealized state of affairs, “both future and hypothetical” and are therefore semantically incompatible with predicates which “presuppose or imply objective knowledge of truth value” (1972: 83-4). Interestingly, one of the examples she chooses to illustrate this point (# *It is true for God to exist*) is a mirror image of (10) above. The hypothetical nature of *for*-clauses leads her to consider the possibility that *for-to*-clauses might be derived from *if*-clauses, but she rejects this possibility on the basis that the two have too different distributions (1972: 85).

Carstairs takes up Bresnan’s hunch and goes as far as suggesting a “special relationship” between certain *for*-complements and certain *if*-clauses (1973: 152). He points out that both types of clauses only allow *iterable* predicates (or stage level predicates in Carlson’s 1977 terms) when introducing complements of factive predicates and when the subject of the predicate in the subordinate clause is a definite NP.

(13)

- a. I hate it for John to be more popular than me.
- b. *I hate it for John to be taller than me.

(14)

- a. I hate it if John is more popular than me.
- b. *I hate it if John is taller than me.

(Carstairs 1973: 148-49, ex. 4 and 15)

Moreover, both clauses can be used with counterfactuals:

(15)

- a. John would hate it for his wife to be learning a foreign language.
- b. John would hate it if his wife were learning a foreign language.

(Carstairs 1973: 150, ex. 21-22)

Thus, he concludes, *for-to* clauses “seem to function semantically as the protasis of a conditional” (1973: 152). Following Carstairs and using similar data, Pesetsky (1991) even proposes to alter the IC rule that I described in the previous chapter to apply to *for-to*-clauses as well.

I do not wish to dwell here on the exact relationship between *for-to*-clauses and irrealis *if*-clauses, as taking on a further subordinator would be too big a task for a short paper as this one (and *for* is not immune to controversy itself cf. *The Cambridge Grammar* p.1181-83). What I intend to show by stressing the similarities between these subordinators is that it is possible, semantically, to have a subordinator that introduces hypothetical clauses without implying a conditional meaning. The fact that *for-to*-clauses have this interpretation whilst not bearing any diachronic or synchronic relationship with conditional constructions shows this much less controversially than irrealis *if*.

In fact, other languages also have uncontroversial alternatives to irrealis clauses. In Italian, Spanish and Catalan, three languages that allow the subjunctive mood in a much wider range of *that*-clauses, subjunctive *that*-clauses and irrealis *if*-clauses are identical in meaning ((16) and (17) respectively):

(16)

- a. *Mi piace che la gente mi sorrida.* (Italian)
me please.3SG that the people me smile.SUB.3SG
“I like it if people smile at me.”

- b. *Les molesta que te mire.* (Spanish)
they annoy.3SG that you look-at.SUB.1SG
“It annoys them if I look at you.”

- c. *M'agrada molt que facis pastissos.* (Catalan)
me-please.IND.3SG a-lot if make.SUB.32SG cakes
“I like it a lot if you make cakes.”

(17)

a. *Mi piace se la gente mi sorride.* (Italian)

me please.3SG if the people me smile.IND.3SG

“I like it if people smile at me.”

b. *Les molesta si te miro.* (Spanish)

they annoy.3SG if you look-at.IND.1SG

“It annoys them if I look at you.”

c. *M'agrada molt si fas pastissos.* (Catalan)

me-please.IND.3SG a-lot if make.IND.32SG cakes

“I like it a lot if you make cakes.”

(The Catalan and Spanish examples are from Quer 2002: 242, ex. 1 and 3)

To conclude, in this section I have argued that irrealis clauses have a semantic interpretation that distinguishes them from ordinary conditional clauses. Irrealis clauses refer to hypothetical states of affairs on which the matrix predicates expresses a judgement. No condition is expressed and no causal relationship is implied between the *if*-clause and its matrix. In the next section I will consider the purely syntactic characteristics of irrealis clauses.

2.2. The syntax of irrealis clauses.

So far I have shown how irrealis clauses differ from ordinary conditional adjuncts in their interpretation. I will now turn my attention to the even trickier question of their syntactic status. Like Pullum (1987), Lakoff (1968), Noonan (1985) and McCawley (1988) I take the view that irrealis *if* is a member of the subordinator class (complementiser in their terms). This means that, syntactically, I claim that irrealis clauses are VP-internal complements licensed by the matrix predicate rather than ordinary adjuncts. Thus, my first task will be to present a series of syntactic phenomena and tests that show that irrealis clauses behave for the most part like complement clauses. As it will become clear, these tests are not all conclusive: irrealis *if*-clauses do show a certain degree of idiosyncrasy, and grammaticality judgements are sometimes open to question.

Having argued for the complement status of irrealis clauses, I will proceed to discuss the status of the proform *it* that is often (though not always, as we shall see) found to co-occur with them. I will argue, based on Postal and Pullum's (1988) insights on expletives, that this

it is a dummy pronoun that fills the space of the extraposed irrealis clauses, and not a cataphoric proform as argued by Steriade (1981) and Rothstein (1995). Finally, in the last section I will also put forward the suggestion that *when* and *how* might be categorised as declarative subordinators as well

2.2.1. Irrealis clauses. Complements or conditional adjuncts?

We saw in the literature review that, as noted by Pullum (1987: 261) and Pesetsky (1991: 60-4), irrealis clauses are not NPI environments, whereas conditional adjuncts allow and at times require NPIs:

(18)

- a. That panel drops down if anyone pulls this lever.
- b. *I would prefer it if anyone pulled this lever.

(Pullum 1987: 261, ex. 3)

Moreover, irrealis clauses do not have an alternative with *unless*, and they cannot be modified by *only*, *but only if*, or *even* :

(19)

- a. We will go the park tomorrow if it's sunny.
- b. We won't go to the park tomorrow unless it's sunny.
- c. We will go to the park even if it's sunny.
- d. We will go to the park only if it's sunny.
- e. We will go to the park if, but only if, it's sunny.

(20)

- a. I would like it if you came to the party tomorrow.
- b. *I wouldn't like it unless you came to the party tomorrow.
- c. *I would like it even if you came to the party tomorrow.
- d. *I would like it only if you came to the party tomorrow.
- e. *I would like it if, but only if, you came to the party tomorrow.

Irrealis clauses can be used for polite requests, but conditional clauses cannot:

(21)

- a. I'd prefer it if you didn't tell people yet, please.
- b. ??If you didn't tell people yet, I'd prefer it, please.

The crucial claim that irrealis *if* is a subordinator, however, rests not so much in the different constraints on conditional and irrealis clauses in terms of NPIs and modifiers, but on their different status within the sentence. You will recall from the discussion of prepositions and subordinators in the introduction of this dissertation that complement clauses differ from adjuncts in a range of syntactic behaviours. I will now use some of the tests introduced there to show the difference between irrealis clauses and ordinary conditional adjuncts.

a) Conditional *if* can take a range of different complements, from PPs to APs to gerund-participial complements (22). Attempts to use one of these types of dependents with irrealis *if* result in ungrammaticality (unless, of course, the *it* is interpreted exophorically)¹⁹:

(22)

- a. If in doubt, see me.
- b. If known, such facts have been reported.
- c. If possible, you should test all moving parts.
- d. If coming by car, take the A10 and turn off at the A414.

(23)

- a. *I'd prefer it if in doubt.
- b. *I like it if known.
- c. *It'd be grateful if possible.
- d. *It'd be wonderful if coming by car.

The unacceptability of sentences in (23) may be considered a consequence of the fact that, semantically, the *it* in the matrix clause has nothing to (cataphorically) refer to in the conditional adjunct. It is indeed the case that ordinary conditional clauses with a sentence initial *if*-clause of the types above are equally odd (again, the *it* has to be interpreted as referring to the *if*-clause)

(24)

- a. *If possible, I would prefer it.

¹⁹ From here onwards I will just assume, unless otherwise stated, that the exophoric reading is not available and I will judge clauses accordingly.

- b. *If coming by car, I like it.

Note, however, that irrealis clauses that are *not* preceded by *it* are just as unacceptable without a finite verb:

(25)

- a. *Imagine if coming by car!
- b. *I hate if kept refrigerated.
- c. *I prefer if in doubt.

b) With regards to WH-extraction, conditional adjuncts are strong islands, but extraction from irrealis clauses is acceptable.

(26)

- a. I would stop reading The Times if they put up a pay wall.
- b. *What would you stop reading The Times if they put up __?

(27)

- a. People would hate it if newspapers put up pay walls.
- b. What would people hate it if newspapers put up __?

Relativization also shows the same pattern. Conditional adjuncts do not allow extraction, but irrealis clauses do:

(28)

- a. *A contract that you will receive your money back if you sign __ and return __ to us.
- b. A contract which I would be grateful if you could sign __ and return __ to us.
- c. A contract which I would hate it if I had to sign __ and return __ to those crooks.²⁰

c) Conditional adjuncts cannot be the focus of a pseudo cleft (29a-b), whereas irrealis clauses are acceptable in this position (29c-d) (Pullum 1987: 266):

²⁰ (28b) is an attested example found by Geoffrey Pullum in an email addressed to him (p.c.).

(29)

- a. Pibe would look great if he trimmed his beard.
- b. *What Pibe would look great is if he trimmed his beard.
- c. I would really hate it if I had no money.
- d. What I would really hate is if I had no money.

It-clefts are particularly useful in showing the difference between the different function of irrealis clauses and conditional adjuncts. Both items can be foregrounded (cf. *The Cambridge Grammar*: 1417-18):

(30)

- a. My parents hate it if I don't wash up.
- b. It's if I don't wash up that my parents hate__.
- c. It'd be wonderful if he did the dishes properly.
- d. It's if he did the dishes properly that __ would be wonderful.²¹

(31)

- a. The council will close the school if the government cuts the budget.
- b. It's if the government cuts the budget that the council will close the school.

In the it-clefts in (30) there are a transitive verb (*hate*) occurring without a direct object or an internal complement and a verb (*would be*) occurring without a subject. This is only possible because they do have a complement and subject, but they have simply been moved to the front. If we removed the *it*-cleft parts of the sentences the remaining clauses would not be grammatical, because they would lack their obligatory complements. (31b), on the contrary, would be perfectly grammatical even without the foregrounded element, as it would only be missing an optional adjunct.

d) When irrealis clauses are found with adjuncts, the irrealis clause has to be nearer the verb than the adjunct, as it is to be expected if it is a complement:

²¹ *The Cambridge Grammar* (p. 1418) argues that content clauses are not readily foregrounded:

- i) # It's that he did it deliberately that I'm inclined to think.
- ii) # It's why no one told us that I'm wondering.

My informants do not find (ii) particularly ungrammatical, and similar sentences become more acceptable if one imagines them within a larger discourse, as in the following:

A: It'd be wonderful if he did the dishes every now and then.

B: No, it's if he did the dishes PROPERLY that would be wonderful!

(32)

- a. It would be preferable if you could contact me in person if you have any complaints.
- b. *It would be preferable if you have any complaints if you could contact me in person.²²

Not all syntactic tests, however, point towards complement status for irrealis clauses. With regards to auxiliary-stranding ellipsis²³, irrealis clauses do not behave as complements. As *The Cambridge Grammar* notes (p. 1520), it is common in this kind of ellipsis for all dependents of VP to be omitted. However, in some cases some elements may be retained, but there are severe restrictions on which items can be kept; complements cannot be retained, but adjuncts can:

(33)

- a. *Kim had seemed_i fairly confident even though Pat had ___i [extremely pessimistic].
- b. *I haven't [put the TV]_i in the bedroom: I have ___i [in the lounge].
- c. You can't [cut that]_i with scissors though you probably could ___i [with a razor blade].

(*The Cambridge Grammar*, p.1520, ex. 3)

(33a-b) are unacceptable because the items in brackets are both complements. Conversely, (33c) is fine because *with a razor blade* is not a complement, but just an adjunct. Given what I have shown so far, we would expect that if we apply this test to irrealis clauses and conditional adjuncts the former would not be allowed to be retained. This, however, is not the case. Consider the following:

(34)

- a. *I'm hoping that it will rain and John is that it will snow.
- b. ?I would like it if it rained and John would if it snowed.
- c. I will tell them their results if they phone and John will if they come in person.

²² (32b) would be acceptable with intonation breaks on either side of the adjunct, i.e. *It would be preferable, if you have any complaints, if you contacted me in person*. In this case, however, the item within the commas would be a supplement, that is an element that is not integrated in the syntactic structure of the clause (cf. *The Cambridge Grammar* p. 1350) and not an adjunct.

²³ *The Cambridge Grammar* (p. 1520, f. 39) uses this term instead of the more common 'VP deletion' or 'VP ellipsis' because what is deleted is not necessarily a VP.

As we can see in (34) *that*-clauses are definitely ungrammatical in these contexts, but native speakers do not have the same expected reaction with irrealis clauses. I have decided to mark (34b) with a ?, however, because it does not seem quite as acceptable as (34c) where a conditional adjunct is retained. I do not have an explanation for this data other than that fuzzy behaviour should be expected in a construction that has possibly only emerged recently.

A similar inconsistency is flagged up by Steriade, and I have briefly covered it in my previous chapter (ex. 21-22). I repeat her example here as (35):

(35)

- a. Just how sorry that he left do you think you are?
- b. *Just how sorry if he left do you think you are?

(Steriade 1981: 9, ex. 23-4)

As we saw in the previous chapter, the ungrammaticality of (35b) is due to the fact that *sorry if the left* is not a constituent like *sorry that he left*. This apparently shows that in these cases irrealis clauses are not complement clauses. However, if we consider that most complement irrealis *if*-clauses have to be extraposed (and leave a dummy *it* behind), it is possible to explain (35) as a consequence of the fact that the *if*-clause is extraposed, and that a null element, rather than a dummy *it*, is left behind. In this sense, adjective predicates seem to an extent to resist the assimilation of irrealis *if*-clauses to full complement status that we see with verbs, where extra position is no longer necessary with certain predicates (*prefer*, *imagine*, etc. see below).

The peculiar behaviour of adjectives is noted also by Pesetsky (1991: 78), who notices that, when functioning as complement of adjectives, irrealis clauses allow NPIs. This, as we saw earlier in this section, constitutes one of the most reliable ways of distinguishing between conditionals and irrealis clauses. Consider (36):

(36)

- a. I would be happy if Bill won anything.
- b. Mary would be glad if anyone came.
- c. Sue would be proud if her team could complete at all.

(Pesetsky 1991: 78, ex. 321)

The data in (36) should point towards an ordinary conditional interpretation, but there is also evidence which calls for caution before dismissing the irrealis analysis altogether. Pesetsky notes that there is a subtle semantic difference between *if*-clauses that follow transitive adjectives, where the irrealis interpretation is at least available, and those that follow intransitive adjectives:

(37)

- a. Mary would be glad if the war were over.
- b. Sue would be somber if her fish died.

(Pesetsky 1991: 78, ex. 319-20)

Pesetsky points out that in (37a) the war being over is the subject of Mary's happiness, but in (37b) the subject of Sue's somberness is not necessarily the fish's death. Moreover, returning to Pesetsky's observation on NPIs above, a pattern seems to emerge that brings the semantic differences above together. Pesetsky (1991: 78) notices that the presence of NPIs in these contexts becomes less acceptable when adjectives like *glad* are used in a way that makes the complement reading stronger, as when it is used as a polite request, when it approaches the meaning of *want* (cf. also ex 21 above):

(38)

- a. # I'd be glad if you turned any lights off. Thank you.
- b. # It's so hot! I'd be very glad if you brought me anything.

(Pesetsky 1991: 78, ex. 322)

Finally, it should be noted that irrealis clauses have a more limited distribution than declarative *that*-clauses, as they cannot occur as subjects, complements of prepositions, and, in some cases, as non-extraposed complements. We can see the differences with *that*-clauses in (39)

(39)

- a. That you travelled that far for me is wonderful.
- b. *If you travelled that far for me would be wonderful.
- c. I adore that you are always on time.
- d. *I would adore if you could come tomorrow.

- e. Considering that they asked me, I will bring some extra food.
- f. *Considering if they asked me, I would bring some extra food.

These differences are noticed by all the authors that have concerned themselves with irrealis clauses, and, with the exception of Pullum, they all reject the subordinator hypothesis on the basis of these differences. I do not think, however, that the constraints in (39) are a strong enough reason to do so, especially in the face of the large body of evidence that I have presented so far. Moreover, the constraint on appearing in complement position without an expletive (39d) is not as strong as it may have seemed to some authors when they were writing twenty years ago. As I have hinted at already, *prefer*, *imagine* and probably even *appreciate* already allow irrealis clauses in that position. The following are all from the written section of the COCA and their grammaticality is uncontroversial:

(40)

- a. Imagine if we all got together and turned against the Nazis.
- b. If she's going to collect the locks, we would appreciate if she didn't bring hem to school.
- c. Tell him that next time you'd prefer if he consulted you before blowing the budget on a big-ticket item.

Moreover, *like*, *love*, and especially *hate* also seem to be following the same path, as these examples from the internet show:

(41)

- a. I would like if each email account showed in its own notification.
- b. I agree. I would hate if my dead links where deleted without me knowing.
- c. I would love if I could somehow get the Obamas to adopt my baby.²⁴

But the strongest argument against using distributional differences between irrealis *if* and declarative subordinator *that* as reasons for rejecting a subordinator label is that interrogative subordinator *if* also shows many distributional differences with the other interrogative subordinator *whether*. Interrogative *if* is not allowed in the following constructions:

²⁴ (41a): <http://www.precentral.net/dear-palm-what-we-need-next-updates>
 (41b) <http://deliciousforum.com/forum/comments.php?DiscussionID=404>
 (41c) <https://twitter.com/QuinnFabrayGLEE> [All accessed 28th July 2010]

(42)

- a. I'm going to see her whether/*if you like it or not. (*Exhaustive conditional construction*).
- b. She can't make up her mind whether/*if to accept. (*Infinitival complement clause*).
- c. Whether/*if this was the right decision remains unclear. (*Subject*).
- d. Whether/*if it will work we shall soon find out. (*Preposed complement*).
- e. I don't know whether/*if or not she'll accept. (*When or not follows the subordinator*).
- f. This question, whether/*if the commissioner exceeded the terms of reference, will need to be carefully investigated. (*Supplement to an NP*).²⁵

(*The Cambridge Grammar* p.974, ex. 7-11)

As we can see, the range of differences between *whether* and *if* is much larger than between irrealis *if* and *that*, but this does not lead us to doubt that an interrogative subordinator *if* exists. I believe that the same should be said of irrealis *if*. Given the wealth of evidence in favour of the hypothesis that it exists, the few distributional differences in (39) and the few idiosyncrasies that I have discussed so far should not prevent us from positing a third *if*.

In sum, in this section I have argued that there are sufficient syntactic phenomena to warrant the claim that English has a third type of *if*, that is, a subordinator that introduces irrealis content clauses functioning as subjects or complements inside the matrix VP. I have dealt with some of the phenomena that seem to argue against my claim, but I have shown that these are either minor distributional differences that can occur among members of the same grammatical class, or idiosyncrasies influenced by the semantics of the matrix predicates.

In the next section I will deal with the question of the status of the proform *it* that often occurs with irrealis clauses.

2.2.2. *Irrealis clauses and expletives.*

In Ch. 1 I briefly alluded to the fact that previous studies of irrealis *if* have refused to consider the *it* that often accompanies them as an expletive. This refusal is probably due to the fact that

²⁵ The Cambridge Grammar also lists 'complement to *be*' as an ungrammatical function for interrogative *if*-clauses. Cf. this dissertation, p. 6, f. 2.

when *it* appears in a direct object slot its position requires one to acknowledge that expletives may occur in θ -marked positions, thus breaching Chomsky's θ criterion that "each argument bears one and only one θ -role, and each θ -role is assigned to one and only one argument" (1981: 36).

As Postal and Pullum explain, the refusal to accept that expletives may occur in direct object position is difficult to defend, as it rests on circular thinking:

Under certain currently defended versions of grammatical theory, this claim is the sole independent support that has been given for the claim that subcategorized positions are always θ -marked; and the latter claim is the sole basis of an intratheoretical bar against analyzing the accusative NP in an accusative and infinitive construction as a derived matrix clause direct object.

(Postal and Pullum 1988: 635)

This attitude is particularly puzzling considering that, as Postal and Pullum have shown, there is ample evidence that expletives routinely occur in θ -marked positions. Here are some of the many examples they present (the first 3 are from Rosenbaum 1967):

(43)

- a. I dislike it that he is so cruel.
- b. I don't suspect it for a moment that you would fail.
- c. They doubt it very much that you will go.
- d. We can take it for granted that there will be an appeal.
- e. I blame it on you that we can't go.

(Postal and Pullum 1988: 642-43, ex. 21-22)

Notice that none of these examples include irrealis clauses, and that they all involve subordinators and complement clauses whose status is unquestioned in the literature. Refusing the irrealis *if* hypothesis on the basis that it breaches the θ -criterion would involve also rejecting perfectly grammatical examples like (43).

Faced with these examples, many authors have attempted to find a function for these expletives that does not involve breaching the θ -criterion. Rothstein (1995: 519) argues that

they are neither dummies nor proforms cataphorically related to the following clause, but that they refer to “something already broached –an event already mentioned or for other reasons contextually prominent.” As an example of this external, pragmatic antecedent Rothstein borrows an example from Bolinger (1977):

(44)

- a. If he asks you to help him, just say that you regret (*it) that you can't.
- b. You shouldn't regret it that you were helpful.

(Bolinger 1977: Ch. 4, ex. 39-40, cited in Rothstein 1990:520)

The difference, Bolinger and Rothstein argue, is due to the fact that in (44a) the complement of *regret* is a hypothetical “nonspecific object”, whereas in (44b) it is an actual event, and only the latter can be the antecedent of *it*.

Rothstein's argument resembles very closely Kiparsky and Kiparsky's notion of ‘factive *it*’ (1970). ‘Factive *it*’ is the *it* that co-occurs with *that*-clauses functioning as complements of factive predicates, and Kiparsky and Kiparsky consider it as an optional reduced form of ‘*fact*’, a deep structure component of factive complements (1970:156-7). In their analysis of factive predicates' complements, sentences of the type ‘*I regret that John is ill*’ appear as ‘*I regret **the fact** that John is ill*’ in deep structure. Whilst they do not consider factive *it* a referential pronoun in Rothstein's terms, they make a point of distinguishing it from expletive *it*, and they give similar readings of minimal pairs like the one in (45). In (45a) *expect* is not a factive predicate, and its complement is not presupposed. When *it* is present, however, as in (50b), *expect* is interpreted factively, and its complement is interpreted as being presupposed. The items in brackets clarify the difference in meaning:

(45)

- a. I had expected that there would be a big turnout (but only three people came).
- b. I had expected it that there would be a big turnout (this is ridiculous, get more chairs).

(Kiparsky and Kiparsky 1970: 166)

The difference seems clear, but it is not across the board. Many of the examples that Postal and Pullum (1988) present have neither a ‘factive reading’ nor an external one, and irrealis clauses are perfect counterexamples to Rothstein and Bolinger's claim that *it* can only refer to actual events. Moreover, as Kim and Sag (2005) argue, against Rothstein, the presence or

absence of *it* seems to be lexically subcategorised, as various counterexamples can be found to any attempt to find clear patterns for its appearance. The notion of factivity is indeed an intriguing one for our analysis, for, as Pullum (1987), Pesetsky (1991), and Quer (2002) have noted, irrealis clauses seem to occur only with factive predicates. Nonetheless, the fact that dummy *it* can also occur in non-factive environments does not point to factivity as a satisfactory analytical tool. What is more, whilst factivity does seem to have some bearing on the syntax of complements, it belongs more to the realms of semantics than syntax, and it cannot explain the clear and across the board syntactic differences between expletives and referential pronouns.

In their discussion of expletives in subcategorized position, Postal and Pullum (1988) provide four syntactic tests that make it possible to distinguish between expletives from ordinary referential *it*. If applied to irrealis clauses these tests show that irrealis *it* cannot but be considered an expletive. As a comparison I will use the examples given by Postal and Pullum (1988). To their tests I also add –in e) and f)– two more by Seppänen (2002).

a) *Expletive NPs do not support Emphatic Reflexives:*

(46)

- a. *It can itself rain upward if the wind is right.
- b. *I'd like it itself if users could set a limit on the length of comments.

b) *Expletive NPs do not coordinate with other expletives or other items:*

(47)

- a. *It and there was respectively proved to be raining and claimed to be a flood in the valley.
- b. *I would have loved it and its consequence for the country if Ghana had won the World Cup.

c) *Expletive NPs do not appear in nominalization of-phrases:*

(48)

- a. my observation of it falling/*raining.
- b. *my liking of it if Ghana won the World Cup.

d) *Expletive NPs do not appear in tough movement subjects:*

(49)

- a. *It was tough to prevent *t* from becoming obvious that things were out of control.
- b. *It will be hard to prevent from being newsworthy if Karen were elected.²⁶

e) *Expletive NPs cannot bear contrastive stress* (Seppänen 2002: 451):

(50)

- a. *Raining? No IT isn't raining, IT is snowing.
- b. *Wonderful? No, IT would be horrible if they came.
- c. *Like it? I hate IT if I run out of tea!

f) *(Following from e), expletive NPs cannot be the focus of it-clefts* (Seppänen 2002: 451):

(51)

- a. *I hope it isn't it that is snowing.
- b. *I hope you don't think it is it that would be wonderful if they came.
- c. *I'm horrified that it is it that you would like if they came.

The question of the referential or otherwise status of irrealis *it* is raised also by Pesetsky (1991). You will recall from the previous chapter that Pesetsky argues that the If-Copying interpretative rule (IC) is only allowed to apply when the *if*-clause is post-verbal and the *it* functioning as direct object is non-referential. His analysis of the proform *it* would seem to coincide with that of Postal and Pullum (1988) and Pullum (1987), who consider the *it* in question as an expletive. Nonetheless, Pesetsky rejects this option, for he claims that expletives quite simply do not exist as a syntactic item. He defines expletives as semantically empty (non-referring) items that are not assigned θ -roles. He then claims that in irrealis clauses these two conditions fail to coincide because, at the same time, the *it* can be θ -marked before the IC applies and, once the IC applies and replaces it with a clause, the semantics never needs to interpret it (and, in theory, assign it no meaning):

This makes it impossible to ask whether this object *it* is or is not an expletive. It is an expletive in that it does not receive any semantic interpretation. It is a non-expletive in that it receives a θ -role at all levels before the IC applies.²⁷

²⁶ Example (49b) is from Pullum (1987: 263, ex. 15). He notes that the sentence is grammatical with *was* instead of *were* “only as a (rather odd) conditional claim, with the meaning ‘If Karen was elected, then it will be hard to prevent from being newsworthy’, where *it* can refer to anything” (Pullum 1987: 264).

(Pesetsky 1991: 74)

One of the problems with this analysis of *it* is that it cannot account for declarative non-irrealis extraposed clauses such as those presented in Postal and Pullum (1988). Excluding an expletive *it* in cases like these would require another interpretative rule to apply in these cases as well, but it is hard to imagine what this rule would be, and why it would be a good idea to posit a rule that triggers a representation that is either identical to non-extraposed clauses (52a-b), or that is just gibberish (52c-d):

(52)

- a. I like that the sun is shining.
- b. That the sun is shining is great.
- c. I like that the sun is shining that the sun is shining.
- d. That the sun is shining is great that the sun is shining.

Extraposition can account for these clauses without problems, but it requires a) that one recognize the existence of expletives and b) that one accept that the θ -criterion might be, alas, wrong.

The tests presented above are not the only reason for excluding a referential function for irrealis *it*. There are two other important arguments in favour of an expletive analysis. Firstly, as we saw in Ch. 1 when discussing Pesetsky's proposal, no other proforms can substitute irrealis *it* (ex. 26 from Ch. 1):

(53)

- a. *I would love that_i [if unicorns existed]_i.
- b. *We can enjoy this_i without shame [if unicorns exist]_i.
- c. *I would prefer this_i if Kim [were not informed]_i.

Secondly, an anaphoric element in this position would breach the Backwards Anaphora Constraint (Bresnan 1971, Postal 1972). As *The Cambridge Grammar* (pp. 1475-1480) argues, constraints on anaphora are still not entirely understood, so one should be careful not to overstate the BAC. However, if we try to place anaphoric elements in similar position to irrealis *it*, that is, inside the matrix VP or as subjects, the result is clearly ungrammatical:

²⁷ The levels Pesetsky refers to are D-structure, S-structure and LF. The IC rule is a post-LF rule.

(54)

- a. *Mary told him_i that John_i had to leave.
- b. *He_i was happy that John_i had won.

Moreover, we should also ask whether *it* in subject position can ever be cataphoric to a clause at the end of the VP. We can test this using a verb that does not allow extraposition, like *mean* or *entail* :

(55)

- a. That she is a witch entails that we have to kill her.
- b. It entails that we have to kill her that she is a witch.

Of course, these verbs do allow a referential *it* when it is anaphoric as opposed to cataphoric, that is when it follows its antecedent (56a), even when the antecedent is an *if*-clause. If we try to move its antecedent to after the VP, however, the result is unacceptable:

(56)

- a. [If she were a witch]_i it_i would entail that we have to kill her.
- b. ?? It would entail that we have to kill her if she were a witch.

We can assume from (56) that an *if*-clause at the end of the sentence cannot act as antecedent for a cataphoric *it* in subject position. But this is precisely the position where we find extraposed subject *if*-clauses. This cannot but lead us to conclude, together with the other reasons shown so far, that the *it* in extraposed clauses cannot be referentially linked to the extraposed irrealis clause, that is, that it cannot but be an expletive.

Finally, a look at other languages that differentiate between expletives and referential pronouns can throw further light on the status of irrealis *it*. Iatridou and Embick (1997) show that, contrarily to English, *pro*-drop languages have strict constraints on the type of antecedents that *pro* can take. They present data from Modern Greek, Spanish, Catalan, Italian and Bulgarian. Here I will show just data from Italian (the examples are adapted from the Catalan examples in Iatridou and Embick 1997).

In Italian *pro* cannot have a clause as antecedent, as it can be seen in (57):

(57)

- a. *Se [arriviamo tardi]_i pro_i piacerà a Maria

If arrive.1PL late *pro* please. FUT.3SG to Maria
 ‘If we arrive late it will please Maria’

Italian has a different anaphoric element for clauses, *ciò*:

(58)

- a. **Se [arriveremo tardi]_i ciò_i piacerà a Maria*
 If arrive.1PL late this please. FUT.3SG to Maria
 ‘If we arrive late this will please Maria’.

Finally, in Italian expletive subjects are null, so care should be taken to distinguish the ungrammatical example in (57) with the expletive subject below:

(59)

- a. *Se arriviamo tardi pro sarà una vergogna.*
 If arrive.1PL late *pro* be.FUT.3SG a shame
 ‘It will be a shame if we arrive late.’

We can see that whereas English does not differentiate between referential and expletive *it*, Italian distinguishes between expletive (*pro*) and proforms with clausal antecedents (*ciò*). As expected given the analysis presented in this paper, there is a clear difference in Italian between irrealis complement clause, where *pro* is used, and ordinary conditional clauses. Notice how Pullum’s unicorns examples are translated in Italian (1987):

(60)

- a. It would be wonderful if unicorns existed.
 b. *Se gli unicorni esistessero sarebbe meraviglioso.*
 c. If unicorns existed then it would be verifiable.
 d. **Se gli unicorni esistessero sarebbe verificabile.*
 e. *Se gli unicorni esistessero ciò sarebbe verificabile.*

2.3. When and how.

Before I conclude this chapter, I should mention that subordinator status should probably also be extended to two items that can appear in contexts that closely resemble irrealis clauses. Consider the following examples:

(61)

- a. I hate (it) when people say that learning Latin teaches you to be logical.
- b. I hate (it) how classicists think they know more about grammar than linguists.

In the clauses in (61) the states of affairs in the *when* and *how* clauses are the logical argument of *hate*. (61a) is very similar in meaning to irrealis *if*-clauses, as it should be expected given the semantic similarities between *when* and *if* (cf. Traugott 1986, Kratzer 1995). *When*-clauses are not as hypothetical as *if*-clauses, and indeed (61a) seems to imply that the fact that people make unsubstantiated claims about Latin is a real occurrence. In fact, *when* clauses are not possible when the verb in the matrix clause is in irrealis mood. *How*-clauses appear closer to *that*-clauses than irrealis ones, as they do not convey any degree of irreality, and they are also not possible with the matrix verb in irrealis mood.

The case for subordinator status for *how* and *when* seems even stronger than for irrealis *if*, as their occurrence without expletive *it* is undoubtedly more acceptable and more common than with *if*-clauses. In fact, *how* is already recognised as a subordinator in *The Cambridge Grammar* (p. 954), which notes that *how* can be used as a variant of *that* in informal style without “any trace of its usual manner or degree meaning” and that in these cases it has clearly lost its interrogative status and has been reanalysed as a declarative subordinator. *The Cambridge Grammar* also notes that because of its interrogative origins, this type of *how* is found only with predicates that can take interrogative as well as declarative complements (p. 954). This claim is however refuted by examples like (61b), or other perfectly acceptable (if colloquial) examples with factive predicates like *like*, *love*, etc.:

(62)

- a. It’s astonishing how they are trying to convince us that the cuts are good for us.
- b. I love how he’s still the same man after all this time.
- c. I like how you point out that action figures for boys are never deemed unrealistic.

Given the other uses of these items, care should be taken not to confuse declarative *how* and *when* with their interrogative, exclamative (for *how*) and relative counterparts:

(63)

- a. I love how you’ve styled your hair! (*fused relative*)
- b. They asked us when they could come and visit. (*interrogative*)
- c. It’s amazing how many people came! (*exclamative*)

There is not enough space here to pursue the question of the status of *when*-clauses and *how*-clauses, but it is interesting to note that their movement from interrogative or adjunct clauses to complement clauses closely resembles that of irrealis clauses.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented semantic and syntactic evidence that English has a third *if*, that is, a declarative subordinator that introduces irrealis clauses functioning as internal complements. I have shown that irrealis clauses refer to hypothetical states of affairs, but that they do not convey the idea of condition like ordinary conditional *if*-clauses. Syntactically, irrealis clauses also differ from conditional adjunct in a series of ways. Irrealis *if* cannot be replaced by other prepositions or phrases that have conditionanl meaning, like *provided that* or *unless*, and cannot be modified by *even*, *only* or *but only if*. Moreover, irrealis clauses are not NPI licensing contexts like conditional adjuncts. Most importantly, irrealis clauses fulfill a different function in phrase structure. Most tests of complementhood –such as extraction, preposing, clefting and constituent ordering– show that irrealis clauses are VP-internal complements and not adjuncts. I also showed that irrealis clauses are often extraposed, either from their subject or object position, and that an expletive *it* takes their place as the syntactic subject or direct object. I argued that extraposition is the only tenable account, as syntactic tests show that the *it* that cooccurs with irrealis clauses is subject to all the constraints of expletives, and is barred from being a referential pronoun by various anaphoric constraints. Finally, I concluded the chapter by suggesting that the subordinator class be enlarged to *when* and *how* as well. In the next chapter, I will consider the case of *if* with dubitative predicates, and will discuss whether it should also be classified as irrealis *if*.

Chapter 3

Interrogative *if*?

Introduction.

In this chapter I will discuss a possible candidate for the new label of subordinator-*if* that I have not mentioned so far. This is the *if* that occurs in subordinate clauses functioning as internal complements of *doubt*, as in the example below.

(1)

I doubt if the monarchy will last.

The main reason for suspecting that this *if* may not be an interrogative subordinator is that, semantically, the clause in (1) does not express a question. *The Cambridge Grammar* (p. 984) points out that *doubt* expresses “an inclination to believe that the embedded proposition is true” rather than an uncertainty or query. Thus, the embedded clause does not contain, like other interrogatives, a variable *x* (or an *index-dependent* denotation, cf. Groenendijk & Stokhof 1982: 177) but is a full proposition with truth conditions, or *index-independent* denotation. This is made evident by the fact that *or not* cannot be added to *if*-clauses licensed by *doubt*, as *or not* can only be used when a variable is involved.

Doubt also licenses declaratives introduced by *that*. Whilst other predicates (e.g. *know*, *tell* etc.) can also license different types of complements, with *doubt* there is no difference in meaning between a declarative and an interrogative complement. We can see this contrast in (2) and (3).

(2)

- a. She didn't say that she wrote it.
- b. She didn't say whether she wrote it.

(3)

- a. I doubt that she wrote it.
- b. I doubt whether she wrote it.

(*The Cambridge Grammar*, p. 984, ex. 46)

As *The Cambridge Grammar* notes, in the situation described by (2a) but not by (2b) she may have said ‘I didn’t write it’. In (3) however, there is no semantic difference at all between *a* and *b*, with both meaning something like “I don’t think it’s true that she wrote it.” It seems clear, then, that there is at the very least a mismatch between syntax and semantics when it comes to clauses licensed by *doubt*. This may lead one to suspect that the *if* in question may not be an interrogative subordinator at all.

A main objection to considering complements of *doubt* as interrogative is that *doubt* does not license open interrogatives or directive interrogatives:

(4)

- a. *I doubt what colour they prefer.
- b. *I doubt where they went.
- c. *I doubt who they invited.
- d. *I doubt whether to go.

Similarly, *doubt* does not allow a concealed question reading when its complement is a definite NP. Instead the definite article is to be interpreted anaphorically (with the antecedent retrieved from larger discourse):

(5)

- a. They asked me the age of my dog (=They asked me what the age of my dog was)
- b. I doubt the age of his dog. (=I call into question the truth/validity of the aforementioned age of his dog.)

As Huddleston (1993) has argued in establishing the interrogative nature of complements of predicates like ‘*you won’t believe*’, the fact that one predicate takes one type of interrogative does not mean that it must take all other subtypes. Huddleston shows that predicate selection is sensitive to a range of syntactic and semantic factors such as whether the predicate is answer or question oriented –that is, whether knowledge of the answer is implied or not– and whether the question expressed is an information question (with statements as answers) or a deliberative or direction question (with directives as answers). Thus, the fact that certain predicates may select only one of many types of interrogatives should not, by itself, make us question the interrogative nature of those clauses. Notice, for example the restrictions on interrogative-licensing predicates like *realize* and *know/predict*:

- (6)
- a. He realized who she was.
 - b. *He realized whether he was dead (or not)

- (7)
- a. She knew/predicted how he would do it.
 - b. She knew/*predicted how to do it.

(Huddleston 1993: 182-183, ex. 29 and 31)

The fact that *doubt* does not take all possible types of interrogative complements is not a sufficient reason for considering *doubt-if*-clauses as irrealis clauses. It should also be ascertained if they have features that make them decidedly declarative and, therefore, possibly irrealis. Katz and Postal (1964: 87-89) have shown that *scarcely* and *hardly* can only occur in declarative clauses, but not questions:

- (8)
- a. He scarcely eats.
 - b. *Does he scarcely eat?
 - c. He hardly eats.
 - d. *Does he hardly eat?

As Baker (1979: 130-31) notes, the same constraints apply to interrogative clauses. *Doubt-if*-clauses behave as interrogatives with regards to these items:

- (9)
- a. *I doubt if/whether he scarcely eats.
 - b. *I doubt if/whether he hardly eats.

Notice that when *that* is used, the result seems at least more acceptable:

- (10)
- a. ?I doubt that he scarcely eats.
 - b. ?I doubt that he hardly eats.

Baker also suggests other items as possible tests for interrogative status, namely *ever/sometimes* and *any/some*. These tests, however, are not illuminating in the case of *doubt*,

as these items may be simply licensed by the fact that *doubt* creates a negative context. Whilst NPIs can be used as diagnostics to distinguish positive declaratives from interrogatives, the fact that they are sensitive to non-affirmative contexts in general does not allow us to use their distribution as a way of discerning among different types of non-affirmative environments (cf. *The Cambridge Grammar* pp. 822-823). Thus, while it is true that *doubt-if*-clauses allow NPIs, so do declaratives when they are licensed by a covertly negative predicate like *deny*:

(11)

- a. I doubt if anyone will come.
- b. He denied that there was anything wrong with the meal.

Finally, the behaviour of *doubt-if*-clauses with regard to modality shows that they cannot be considered irrealis clauses. In Ch.2 I showed, following Pullum (1987), that irrealis clauses cannot function as complements of predicates with *will*. If we use *will* with *doubt* and we keep the verb in the *if*-clause realis, no ungrammaticality ensues:

(12)

- a. *It will be great if Tracy was here. (External reading only).
- b. When she regains consciousness she will doubt if she was able to walk before.

Notice also that, semantically, *doubt* does not appear to make sense with an irrealis clauses:

(13)

- a. # I would doubt it if unicorns existed.
- b. # I would doubt the hypothetical existence of unicorns.

Semantically, (13b) is decidedly odd, as it seems to repeat the same idea twice, that is, that I think that the hypothetical existence of unicorns is hypothetical. Once again, the fact that *doubt* is not a factive predicate may have a bearing on the incompatibility of an irrealis interpretation in these contexts.

Conclusion.

In this chapter I have shown that there are no syntactic grounds for considering *doubt-if*-clauses as anything other than interrogative. The mismatch between syntax and semantics of these clauses has to be considered as the result of the idiosyncrasy of dubitative predicates

rather than as evidence for the existence of a different type of *if*. As far as I am aware, there are no other types of predicates that show a similar mismatch and that could therefore license this non-interrogative *if*. Thus, it seems more parsimonious to simply attribute the syntax semantics mismatch to *doubt* than positing the existence of a special subordinator that only occurs with one predicate.

Conclusion

According to *The Cambridge Grammar*'s revision of the preposition and subordinator classes, English has two *if*'s: a preposition that heads conditional adjuncts, and an interrogative subordinator, that is, a meaningless non-head marker of subordination. In this dissertation I have argued that a third *if* should be posited: a declarative subordinator that introduced irrealis clauses. Following Pullum (1987) I have called it irrealis *if*.

I have presented evidence that strongly suggests that irrealis *if*-clauses function like VP-internal complements or subjects, and not like adjuncts. In syntactic tests like extraction, preposing, and clefting, irrealis clauses behave predominantly like complements. Moreover, no other preposition with conditional or concessive meaning can be used to replace irrealis *if*, which strongly suggest that irrealis clauses should not be considered conditional protases. A close analysis of the semantics of irrealis clauses also points towards a non-conditional analysis.

Most irrealis clauses co-occur with the proform *it* in the subject or direct object position. This has led some authors (Steriade 1981 and Pesetsky 1991) to suggest that irrealis clauses should be considered ordinary conditional adjuncts that, through interpretative rules, are linked to the logical argument position occupied by *it*. I have challenged these accounts and showed that if one applies the tests suggested by Postal and Pullum (1988) and Seppänen (2002), irrealis *it* behaves like a dummy *it*, and that irrealis clauses are simply extraposed subjects or internal complements. What is more, I have shown that extraposition is not always mandatory, and that some predicates already take irrealis clauses as complements without a dummy *it*.

The evidence and arguments I have presented in this dissertation open up a wide range of questions and directions for future research. As I briefly discussed in Ch. 2 §3, *when* and *how* are also strong candidates for the subordinator label, and more detailed analysis of their behaviour and status is undoubtedly warranted. Similarly, the close semantic relationship between irrealis *if*-clauses and *for-to*-clauses is also worth investigating in more detail.

Most importantly, the data I have presented in this dissertation points towards an ongoing diachronic process of gradual clause integration (cf. Lehmann 1988, Givón 2001, and Hopper and Traugott 1993). Irrealis clauses probably started from the loosely attached adjunct position, moved on to a more integrated one as extraposed complements, and are currently

becoming even more attached as non-extraposed complements, as suggested by the fact that more and more predicates allow such close integration, especially in colloquial speech. As Hopper and Traugott point out (1993: 168) the diachronic process of clause combining has only recently begun to attract in depth study. Irrealis clauses constitute a great opportunity to add precious new insights in this field of diachronic research.

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